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49

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

17 January 1951

SUBJECT: NIE-4: SOVIET COURSES OF ACTION WITH RESPECT TO GERMANY

THE PROBLEM

To estimate probable Soviet courses of action with respect to Germany.

CONCLUSIONS

Soviet Objectives in Germany.

1. The Kremlin has the ultimate aim of bringing under its control the strategically important area and resources of Germany. The Kremlin regards any substantial part of Germany not under Soviet control, particularly if associated with the Western Powers, as a major obstacle to the realization of this ultimate aim and as a threat to its own security. The Kremlin will not consider as satisfactory any solution of the German problem that does not bring all of Germany within the Soviet Orbit as a Communist Satellite. Because under present circumstances this goal can be attained only by the use of armed force, the Kremlin pursues interim aims designed to further the ultimate Soviet aim. Foremost is the aim to undermine the Federal German Republic, to forestall its rearmament, and to prevent its political, economic, and military association with the Western Powers.
2. Because of the strategic, economic and political value of Eastern Germany to the Soviet Orbit, the Kremlin aims to strengthen Communist control

- 1 -

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within the German Democratic Republic (GDR), exploit its economic potential, develop its military potential and forces, and further integrate it into the Soviet Orbit. The Kremlin aims to use the GDR to the utmost to bring pressure on the Federal German Republic and even on the Western Powers.

3. The Kremlin aims ultimately to gain complete control of West Germany. Unless or until the Kremlin is prepared to precipitate armed conflict, it will continue its efforts to intimidate the West German population, disrupt the West German economy, draw West Germany's trade to the East, undermine and discredit the allied occupation and the Federal German Government, and develop Communist machinery for future subversion and violence.

4. The Kremlin aims ultimately to eliminate the Western Powers from Berlin and to establish that city as the undivided capital of the GDR and eventually of a Communist Germany. Meanwhile, the Kremlin will use Berlin as a pressure point.

Courses of Action

5. The Kremlin will further strengthen and consolidate Communist control over the political and economic life of the GDR. It will continue to integrate the GDR economy into that of the Soviet Orbit. In furtherance of its determination to strengthen its strategic position with respect to the West, it will continue in East Germany to improve existing military installations and to build new ones, and it will increase the numbers, armament and capabilities of all branches of the Alert Police. The Alert Police may become an effective military force, and possibly German prisoners of war may be returned in organized units specially trained in the USSR to

- 2 -

SECRET

SECRET

augment Alert Police strength.

6. In West Germany possible courses of Soviet action run the gamut from political maneuver to the use of armed force. At first the Kremlin will seek its aims by political maneuver accompanied by increasing menaces and shows of military force. It will exploit four-power negotiations and negotiations between East and West Germans. It may even seek bilateral understanding with the Federal German Government if and when, through the lifting of controls by the Western Powers, the Federal German authorities should be in a position to enter into such an understanding. It will intensify its efforts to intimidate and demoralize the West Germans and the Western Europeans. It will try to distract, divide and confuse the Western Powers. It may stage revolutionary or disruptive outbreaks in Western Europe or elsewhere, and may support additional Communist military operations in Asia or Europe whenever and wherever the Western Powers appear least capable of taking effective counteraction.

7. While the USSR will in the first instance direct its efforts toward frustrating West German rearmament we estimate that it will not be willing, in order to prevent West German rearmament, to give up any essential elements of its present control over the GDR or East Berlin, or of its capabilities for gaining control of all of Germany. We estimate further that it would consider prevention of West German rearmament as merely a first, though essential, step toward attainment of its ultimate objectives in Germany. Even if successful in this step, it would not relax its efforts to gain control of all of Germany.

- 3 -

SECRET

SECRET

8. If the USSR were to become convinced that its program for Germany was unlikely to succeed, that West German rearmament would become a reality, and that West Germany would be closely associated with a powerful Western coalition, it would then face the alternatives of either resorting to military action or accommodating itself to a new European power situation. The second alternative would oblige the USSR to forego for many years its European ambitions and the uniquely favorable opportunity created by the post-war power vacuum in Europe, and would probably be regarded by the Kremlin as a threat to Soviet security. We therefore believe that the Kremlin would be more likely to resort to military action than to accept this alternative.

9. If the Kremlin should decide to resort to military action, it would not be obliged to act immediately. Since West German and Western rearmament would necessarily take time before reaching dimensions considered dangerous by the Kremlin, the Kremlin might prefer to use this period for improving its position in atomic and other weapons, lessening its own vulnerability to air attack, and generally strengthening its industrial potential.

10. The USSR might, however, conclude it would lose more than it would gain by waiting, and might decide to resort immediately to some form of military action. It might still attempt to postpone global conflict by turning its Satellites against West Germany under cover of existing mutual assistance pacts directed against German "aggression" in the hope that the Western Powers could not take effective collective action against such a challenge. On the other hand, the USSR, in order to achieve maximum surprise and quick success, might resort to direct Soviet attack, accepting immediate global

- 4 -

SECRET

SECRET

war.

11. Existing intelligence provides no basis for estimating whether the USSR would strike immediately or prefer to wait. We believe, however, that at some time before West German and Western rearmament reach a point regarded by the Kremlin as dangerous, it is likely to resort to military action.

12. The Kremlin views the allied position in Berlin as a major obstacle to the attainment of long-term Soviet objectives in West Germany and Western Europe, and as a continuing irritant to the Communist program in East Germany. The Kremlin has, however, indicated for some time that it considers the problem of Berlin subordinate to that of Germany as a whole. Whatever further courses of action the USSR may resort to will depend on its estimate of the extent to which such courses of action would contribute to or interfere with realization of its over-all German policy. In addition to continued and intensified harassment of the Western sectors of the city, it may pursue the following courses of action, listed in order of probability:

- (a) Partial or complete denial to the Western Powers of access to Berlin;
- (b) Direct attack on West Berlin by GDR forces;
- (c) Direct attack on West Berlin by Soviet forces.

13. Denial to the Western Powers of Access to Berlin. Both the USSR and the GDR have the capability to interdict allied land communications with Berlin. Such Soviet action would:

- (a) Undermine the morale of West Berlin;

- 5 -

SECRET

SECRET

- (b) Strain the economy of the Western sectors;
- (c) Force the Western Powers to engage in dangerous and expensive relief operations;
- (d) Cause the maldployment of transport aircraft of the Western Powers;
- (e) Provide the Kremlin with a counter for political bargaining, not only on Berlin, but on broader issues; and
- (f) Possibly serve as a prelude to Communist insurrection in West Berlin.

14. The USSR may reinstitute limited restrictions as those of 1948-49, if only for the purpose of exerting pressure. More likely, however, the Kremlin will estimate that even more drastic measures would not involve serious risk of general war. The USSR will therefore supplement its earlier restrictions. It will adopt measures such as jamming communications and other covert devices for obstructing an air lift. If the Western Powers maintain air access to Berlin despite these obstructions, the USSR may openly attack Western aircraft in the corridors. Such a Soviet attack would be undertaken, however, only if the Kremlin were willing to accept a general war.

15. Attack by GDR Forces on West Berlin. In the near future, if not at present, the GDR forces will probably have the strength to overwhelm the garrisons of the Western Powers in West Berlin. The Kremlin must be aware that such an attack by GDR troops on West Berlin would provoke counteraction by the Western Powers which would be almost certain to lead to general war. This course of action therefore appears unlikely unless the Kremlin

SECRET

SECRET

had decided to accept general war with the Western Powers. It is possible that the USSR in an attempt to occupy all of Berlin and yet avoid general war might first withdraw its own occupation forces and then use the military forces of the GDR, possibly in conjunction with Satellite forces, to achieve that objective.

16. Attack by Soviet Forces on West Berlin. Such a Soviet course of action would demonstrate Soviet willingness to accept general war with the Western Powers.

- 7 -

SECRET